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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 052699

FOR MONTVILLE FROM PALMER

FOL RPT MOSCOW 03149 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN BAGHDAD CAIRO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 03149

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, UR, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN EMBASSY BRIEFING ON ASAD VISIT TO MOSCOW

REF: MOSCOW 2826

SUMMARY: SYRIAN EMBASSY DCM GIVES POSITIVE ASSESSMENT
TO "POLITICAL" VISIT OF ASAD, SAYS SOVIET ECONOMIC DEL
WILL LEAVE SOON FOR TALKS IN DAMASCUS ON ACCELERATION OF
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROJECTS, AND REFUSES TO ADMIT THAT
SYRIANS GAVE UP ANYTHING OF SUBSTANCE IN EXCHANGE FOR
ARMS AND ECONOMIC AID. END SUMMARY.

1. POL COUNSELOR RECEIVED FEB. 27 BRIEFING ON ASAD
VISIT BY SYRIAN DCM CHOUERI. DURING DISCUSSION CHOUERI
MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

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PAGE 02 STATE 052699

-- VISIT WAS PRIMARILY "POLITICAL" IN NATURE. TECHNICAL
ECONOMIC AND MILITARY TALKS WILL BE HELD LATER AS INDI-
CATED BY ASAD IN HIS AIRPORT DEPARTURE COMMENTS (REFTEL).
IN THIS REGARD A SOVIET DELEGATION LED BY GKES (SOVIET
AID ORGANIZATION) CHAIRMAN SKACHKOV WILL LEAVE FOR
DAMASCUS ON MARCH 6 TO DISCUSS AN "ACCELERATION" OF SOVIET
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

2. -- SYRIANS DIFFERED WITH SOVIETS OVER BOTH GENEVA CONFERENCE AND EVENTS IN HORN. BUT SOVIETS WERE NOT INSISTENT ON EITHER SUBJECT AND BOTH SIDES SIMPLY LAID OUT THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS. DURING TALKS, SYRIANS SPOKE IN GENERAL TERMS OF "LIBERATION MOVEMENTS" IN AFRICA, BY WHICH THEY MEANT SOMALI ACTIVITY IN OGADEN AND ERITREAN MOVEMENT. NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT SYRIAN OCCUPATION OF LEBANON.

3. -- SYRIANS FELT COMFORTABLE WITH COMMUNIQUE REFERENCE TO TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS MEETINGS AND TO ARAB FRONT AGAINST IMPERIALISM, ZIONISM, AND SEPARATE DEALS. SOVIETS HAD SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL NEGATIVE REFERENCE TO "REACTIONARY ARAB STATES", I.E., SAUDIA ARABIA, BUT DID NOT STRONGLY RESIST WHEN SYRIANS DEMURRED. SYRIAN SIDE SUGGESTED COMMUNIQUE LINE ON SOVIET PARTICIPATION "IN ALL STAGES" OF M.E. SETTLEMENT, BUT SYRIANS CLEARLY HAD IN MIND FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVA OR OTHER UN CONTEXT AND NOT SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN INTER-ARAB DISCUSSIONS A LA TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS. COMMENT. AUSTRIAN EMBASSY DCM SIEGEL GOT IMPRESSION FROM HIS TALK WITH CHOUERI THAT SYRIANS AND OTHER RECENT ARAB VISITORS HAD ARGUED AGAINST COMMUNIQUE REFERENCES TO GENEVA ON GROUNDS THAT SUCH REFERENCES WOULD GIVE SADAT A LOOPHOLE TO PUSH FOR GENEVA IF HIS CURRENT EFFORTS FAIL. IN OTHER WORDS THESE ARABS AND

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 052699

SOVIETS WANT SADAT'S PROSPECTIVE FAILURE TO BE COMPLETE. END COMMENT. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF IRAQI ROLE IN CURRENT ARAB EFFORTS TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES NOR WAS THERE ANY TALK OF SYRIAN-IRAQI BILATERAL DIFFERENCES.

4. -- THERE WAS NO MEETING IN SOVIET UNION BETWEEN JALLUD AND ASAD. ONE SOVIET SOURCE SPECULATED TO CHOUERI THAT JALLUD EXTENDED HIS STAY FOR MEDICAL/REST REASONS. WIDE-SPREAD RUMORS OF IMPENDING ARAFAT VISIT TO MOSCOW ARE PLAUSIBLE, BUT POSSIBLE DATES ARE NOT KNOWN.

5. COMMENT. CHOUERI SEEMED TO REFLECT GENUINE SATISFACTION WITH RESULTS OF VISIT. HE SMILINGLY ACKNOWLEDGED INCREASED SOVIET MILITARY ASSISTANCE WITHOUT, HOWEVER, PROVIDING DETAILS AND HE NOTED "ACCELERATION" OF SOVIET ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. HE DID NOT FEEL THAT SYRIANS HAD GIVEN UP ANYTHING IN RETURN. LANGUAGE ON HORN WAS AMBIGUOUS, HE SAID, AND EMPHASIS ON SOVIET ROLE IN M.E. WAS, FROM SYRIAN STANDPOINT, NO MORE THAN STATEMENT OF REALITY.

6. EGYPTIAN CHARGE, FAROUK SHELBAYA, ON OTHER HAND, TOOK OPPOSITE STANCE DURING CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON FEB. 26. SHELBAYA FELT THAT, WHILE SYRIANS MIGHT TRY TO EXPLAIN AWAY COMMUNIQUE LANGUAGE FAVORABLE TO SOVIETS,

SAUDIS, FOR ONE, WOULD BE EXTREMELY CRITICAL AND EVEN SYRIANS MIGHT FIND SOVIETS USING AGREED UPON LANGUAGE AS POLITICAL LEVER AGAINST SYRIANS IN FUTURE; FOR EXAMPLE, SHOULD ASAD WISH TO REOPEN DIALOGUE WITH AMERICANS.

7. BOTH SHEL BAYA AND CHOUERI WERE ASKED IF THEY HAD ANY INKLING OF NEW SOVIET M.E. PEACE INITIATIVE OR OF SOVIET SUPPORTED INITIATIVE ON PART OF STAND-FAST FRONT. BOTH GAVE NEGATIVE RESPONSE. SHEL BAYA, WHO HAD HAD ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH NUMBER OF MFA NEAR EASTERN COUNTRIES BUREAU OFFICERS ON FEB. 14, SAID SOVIET ATTITUDE COULD BE SUMMARIZED AS "WHAT CAN WE DO?", AN ADMISSION IN HIS EYES OF CONTINUED SOVIET BELIEF THAT U.S. DID INDEED
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PAGE 04 STATE 052699

HOLD 90 PERCENT OF M.E. CARDS IN ITS HANDS. MATLOCK
UNQUOTE VANCE

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